

NEW

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Directions

Project Management

Stewardship Competency Series

Good project management *strengthens* the effectiveness of cross-functional teamwork

Stewardship provides opportunities not only for acquiring new skills, knowledge and behaviours, but also for applying existing competencies in a whole new way.

Project management is one of 15 stewardship competencies identified by the ministry. Competencies are defined, as a core group of skills, knowledge and behaviours that collectively will help employees be successful in their work as the ministry transitions to stewardship. Staff can acquire and improve on their command of these competencies by working within the new business model and through the Centre for Leadership and Learning and ministry learning and development courses, personal research, and mentoring.

"Project management is a skill and set of tools we need to use on a daily basis in the ministry's new organization structure," said Assistant Deputy Minister Gail Paech, who is currently overseeing the ministry's Service Renewal and Alignment Project.

"The ministry is going to be constantly forming cross-functional teams as we move forward and work with partners inside and outside of the ministry. Project management requires you to think about all the components and skills you need to bring together," Paech said.

Project management involves planning, setting priorities, co-ordinating, allocating resources, and delivering quality results within a prescribed time. It also requires monitoring and adjusting the work throughout the project to accomplish goals and best deliver on the ministry's objectives.

It is not a new skill within the ministry. But a stewardship environment requires that good project management concepts such as working in teams and organizing work be applied in

a manner that maximizes the knowledge, effort, and innovation of cross-functional team members, said Sheree Davis, executive lead, Health System Strategy (HSS).

To deliver on strategic objectives, teams need to have a shared understanding of what they are working towards and the expected outcomes.

Davis sees the keys to good project management as:

- Assembling the best team you can
- Building trust among team members
- Defining and communicating a set of shared, achievable goals and measurable outcome expectations and deliverables
- Mapping out the steps of the project and agreeing on timelines
- Identifying the required skills and resources
- Anticipating potential challenges at the outset and devising strategies to resolve them
- Developing individual and shared accountability mechanisms and role clarity.

Timely and meaningful communication is the glue of good project management, Davis explained. "Regular team meetings are a must. Continuously checking in with team members helps to avoid delays, maintains the momentum of a project and keeps ideas flowing. This creates a stronger relationship between team members and leads to better results," she said.

Project management skills are critical as project work increasingly spans various divisions. A division may not be responsible for carrying out all the aspects of a project. But everyone involved on the team needs to be aware of all the pieces and how they fit together. Project management allows everyone to see the whole picture.

A wider range of partners will be involved in accomplishing the ministry's work going forward and this increases the necessity for projects to be well co-ordinated and well managed, said Frank Thiele, HSS's transition manager.

Thiele has had a focal role in co-ordinating the various pieces of the work required to bring HSS to the implementation stage of its transitional structure. "If implementation is the overall project, then there have been many sub-projects that link into the broader objective

and each one of these sub-projects have had to be well managed to achieve our targets," Thiele explained. "In this sense, whatever level we are working at within a project we all need to use good project management skills."

John McKinley, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health System Information Management (HSIM), said that just as stewardship requires taking ownership for the work of the ministry, good project management involves taking ownership of the deliverables. "This is critical because leadership roles may change as we move through the phases of a project," McKinley said.

"We aren't always going to be working together with the same people. Project management creates a foundation to help a new group of people start working well together."

Enhancing project management skills

Cross-functional projects are a way of the future! Enhance your project management skills and be better prepared for your next project opportunity by attending a two-day project management workshop sponsored by MOHLTC. **Register** today for the next ministry workshop on project management, scheduled for Oct. 30/31. Arrangements can also be made for the workshop to be organized for teams or units.

Additional resources and training courses on project management can be found on the Ministry of Government Services' **Project Management Centre of Excellence** site. ■

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Do you have questions about the organizational change?

- Ask your manager
- E-mail your questions or comments to the feedback account at newdirections@mh.gov.on.ca
- Call the feedback line at 1-888-962-0528 or TTY: 1-800-267-5559

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See updates to the
October/November 2007 schedule!